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Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 16 March 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Yesterday, 15 March 2004, Israeli security forces thwarted a homicide bombing when they detained a 12-year-old Palestinian boy, Abdallah Quran, while he was attempting to smuggle a powerful bomb through the Hawara checkpoint, south of Nablus. Exploiting his innocent appearance, two Nablus-based Tanzim terrorists had recruited the boy to transport a bag carrying a fully armed explosive device through the checkpoint and promised him a large sum of money if he would hand it to a woman waiting on the other side. Israeli security forces noticed a suspicious-looking bag in the boy's possession and, upon examining it, discovered a 7-to-10-kilogram explosive charge packed with metal shards, bolts and shrapnel. Subsequently, the boy told the soldiers that he was unaware that he was even carrying the bomb. The terrorists, members of Chairman Yasser Arafat's own Fatah faction, had planned to use the boy as an unwitting suicide bomber, intending to detonate the explosive with a mobile phone as the boy passed near Israeli security forces.

This grave maltreatment of an innocent 12-year-old Palestinian boy brings to a new level of cruelty the tactics of the terrorist organizations operating freely in Palestinian territory. The phenomenon of the exploitation of children by these organizations for the purpose of carrying out terrorist attacks and suicide bombings poses a contemptible and criminal affront to the most basic obligations of human rights and decency. The ongoing failure of the Palestinian leadership to prevent the shameless abuse of children in the terrorist campaign denotes an act of wilful neglect that deserves the condemnation of the international community.

In recent months, three additional attacks involving Arab teenagers have been thwarted, including a homicide attack in Israel by a 17-year-old boy who blew

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himself up near Jinspot, a village east of Qalqilya; a shooting attack in Afula by three teenagers, 13 to 15 years old, who were arrested near an army roadblock in Jenin; and an attempt to smuggle munitions from Egypt in the Rafah area by teens aged 11 to 14 years.

Since the start of the Palestinian campaign of violence in September 2000, minors have successfully carried out 29 suicide attacks, and since January 2001 alone, more than 40 Palestinian minors have been arrested in thwarted suicide attacks. Children are increasingly recruited by Palestinian terrorist organizations for attacks because they can easily pass through crowded areas without arousing suspicion. This practice severely harms the freedom of movement of Palestinian residents and underscores the importance of Israeli security measures. Today Palestinian children and young people are recruited to carry out violent attacks, including suicide bombings, and to assist in a variety of terror-support activities, including the smuggling of arms, spying and digging tunnels. The Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian Authority continue to do nothing to stop the terrorist activity, including the abuse of Palestinian children.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 156 and 67, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ambassador Arye **Mekel**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.